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Operational activities for development segment

Summary record of the 13th meeting
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President: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Vice-President) ..... (Belgium)

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In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*) (A/72/124-E/2018/3, A/72/684-E/2018/7 and A/73/63-E/2018/8)

Panel discussion: "Strengthening global-level accountability, transparency and oversight of the United Nations development system"

1. **The President** asked what factors should be taken into account when considering the Secretary-General's proposal to create a joint executive board of the New York-based funds and programmes.

2. **Mr. Koonjul** (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations), panellist, said that UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS were three distinct bodies that already had a joint Executive Board and bureau. That system provided members of the Executive Board with an overview of the activities of all three agencies, which had been useful in identifying areas for collaborative work. The arrangement was efficient, since there was a single secretariat providing logistical and administrative support for the three annual sessions of the Executive Board. It also enabled smoother collaboration with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

3. The joint segments of the Executive Board promoted coordination and coherence among the agencies. The segments saved time, as agencies presented similar reports together, and afforded an opportunity for delegations to provide feedback and recommendations that applied to all three agencies. The Executive Board also held agency-specific meetings, although issues invariably arose that were of common concern to all three, so there were still opportunities to identify potential areas for collaboration.

4. Having a joint Executive Board reduced travel costs for Member States that had a single focal point for more than one of the agencies. The Secretary-General's proposal to establish a joint executive board for the funds and programmes based in New York — UNDP, UNOPS, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) — could likewise result in savings for some delegations. The arrangement also lowered costs for the participating agencies. For instance, since UNDP hosted the secretariat, UNFPA and UNOPS had been able to cut costs by benefiting from UNDP service legal agreements. Moreover, the preparation of joint documents represented enormous savings in terms of funds and human resources.

5. Improving oversight was certainly important. However, to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it was even more important to increase coherence and coordination at the country level to ensure that all agencies on the ground were working together and delivering as one, taking national priorities into account.

6. It might be worth considering holding more joint meetings of the Executive Boards of the different agencies, as an alternative to merging them into a single executive board. There was currently only one joint meeting of the Executive Boards per year, which was insufficient. The concerns of some delegations that there would not be enough time for discussion of all relevant issues if the Executive Boards were combined were valid. In contrast, more frequent joint meetings would give delegations greater opportunities to participate in relevant discussions, and there could be more focused discussions on how United Nations entities might work together. If the Executive Boards were merged, every effort should be made to make the most of the joint meetings that would likely be held as part of the progress envisaged by the Secretary-General.

7. It was important to align the oversight practices of the agencies by having all of them submit evaluation reports to their respective Executive Boards. Currently, some still submitted reports to their directors.

8. The President asked about the implications of the Secretary-General's proposal to institutionalize the operational activities for development segment as an accountability platform for system-wide performance in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

9. **Mr. Hattrem** (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations), panellist, said that that the Council's operational activities for development segment was one of the most obvious forums for providing system-wide guidance and enhancing the transparency and accountability of the United Nations development

system. However, the segment should be improved by making discussions more evidence-based and ensuring that all actors in the development system — including funds, programmes, agencies, resident coordinators and other country-level representatives — were given an opportunity to contribute. If those changes were made, the Council would also be able to address inter-agency coordination and collaboration with partners within and outside the United Nations. The Secretary-General's proposal to convene two operational activities segments per year could help to achieve that aim. However, any such changes must be considered in the context of the work on the strengthening of the Council, in order to avoid an excessive increase in the number Council meetings.

10. There would be challenges in creating a joint executive board, such as the need for both common and agency-specific segments and the potential difficultly of determining the composition of the new executive board. Nevertheless, the proposal was worth exploring, since many issues of common concern could be addressed well through the creation of a joint board, including the call from Member States for the creation of a system-wide evaluation function to complement the internal evaluation mechanisms of the individual agencies. Such system-wide mandates had the potential to further the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

11. The New York Executive Boards needed to strengthen their effectiveness, transparency and accountability in order to meet the expectations set out in General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. In that connection, in 2017 the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Women and the World Food Programme (WFP) had drafted a non-paper on improving the working methods of their Executive Boards. It was the responsibility of the Presidents of the Executive Boards to follow up on that paper, in order to support and complement the reform of the United Nations development system.

12. **The President** enquired about the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a small, independent system-wide evaluation unit that would be directly accountable to the Council.

13. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP)), panellist, speaking via video link from Rome, said that that the significant efforts made by WFP in recent years to improve its accountability, transparency and oversight had helped to align its work with the 2030 Agenda and prepare it for the upcoming reform and repositioning of the United Nations development system. WFP had developed a new corporate results framework that enhanced its accountability, transparency and capacity for evaluation in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. The new framework, which was already being implemented in 68 of the 80 WFP country offices, enabled the Programme to work in line with national priorities and report more clearly on the resources it received. WFP supported the Secretary-General's proposed reforms. In particular, it would welcome improved governance and oversight by Member States, which would help Governments to achieve the results they wanted on the ground.

14. The WFP evaluation mechanism reported directly to the Executive Board. All evaluation reports were independent and were made public once they had been approved by the Executive Board. Prior to the formal consideration of the reports by the Executive Board, informal round tables involving the Executive Board, the Director of Evaluation and senior management were held to provide an opportunity for a more open and in-depth discussion than was often possible at formal meetings. The Executive Board also held informal sessions on other topics over the course of the year. In 2017, more than 40 days of informal discussions had been organized.

15. Centralized and decentralized evaluations were conducted under the WFP evaluation framework. Decentralized evaluations were overseen by the Office of Evaluation but carried out by evaluation officers within the regional bureaux. Cross-cutting impact evaluations were also conducted worldwide. System-wide evaluation would provide an additional perspective to complement those evaluations. An independent system-wide evaluation function would certainly be useful in principle, although it would be necessary to determine the exact nature of the relationship between that function and existing evaluation entities and processes, including the inter-agency humanitarian evaluations carried out by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It would also be worthwhile increasing the number of joint evaluations, especially in support of joint programming with partners within and beyond the United Nations system.

16. Given that agencies already bore a heavy reporting burden, any new system-wide reporting requirements should be strictly focused on obtaining results that provided a meaningful indication of progress being made towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. WFP had already been working to enhance accountability without creating an excessive reporting burden and was collaborating with other agencies to standardize reporting. Useful lessons could be learned

from the harmonized reporting pilots that were taking place in some countries.

17. Lastly, WFP had joined the International Aid Transparency Initiative and would encourage system-wide participation in that initiative.

18. **Mr. Kanja** (Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation function as envisaged by the Secretary-General would be an appropriate response to the call in General Assembly resolution 71/243 for a mechanism to enhance coherence and interdependence in the overall evaluation architecture of the United Nations development system. The Office of Internal Oversight Services would retain its mandate to carry out independent evaluations of Secretariat entities under the new arrangements. The Office was already effectively coordinating its work with other system-wide oversight bodies, such as the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors, and would ensure that its activities also complemented those of the system-wide evaluation function.

19. Lessons had been learned from the implementation of the policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. First, an inadequately resourced office would run the risk of undermining the quality and usefulness of system-wide evaluation and confidence in the mechanism. Second, information had to flow from the evaluation unit to governing bodies and senior management in order to have an impact.

20. Evaluation could be a very useful support to effective governance and oversight mechanisms if the evaluation body was independent and able to speak the truth to power, and if the results of its work were used to optimize mandate-setting, programme design and resource allocation. However, if evaluation did not have a clear purpose or was not clearly linked to decision-making processes, it would not be an efficient use of time and resources. Cohesive system-wide governance and oversight were also needed in order for the results of evaluations to be used effectively.

21. **Mr. Kramer** (Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit) said that the Joint Inspection Unit was the only independent body with system-wide oversight functions, although it was not the only entity with the capacity to carry out system-wide evaluation. The Joint Inspection Unit had been heavily involved in the development of the system-wide evaluation policy requested in the 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, as contained in General Assembly resolution 67/226, and the conduct of two pilot system-wide evaluations.

22. When considering the Secretary-General's ideas for system-wide evaluation, it would be useful to draw on the experience gained through the significant efforts that had already been made, including the two pilot evaluations, the review of the institutional framework for independent system-wide evaluation and the work on evaluation policy development. The initial focus of efforts to establish an independent system-wide evaluation entity should not be on structures and resources; it was more important to determine the nature of the mechanism, whom it was meant to serve and what action would be taken in response to its findings. While it was up to Member States to define the topics and direction of the evaluations, the experience of the pilot system-wide evaluations suggested that they should be supported by a strong analytical effort to provide them with relevant information on potential areas for evaluation. It was also essential that the target audience for the evaluations was in a position to take meaningful decisions in response to the findings. If the Council were to be the audience, consideration must be given to the matter of whether, and in what way, guidance from the Council influenced decisions of the entities responsible for resource allocation or normative work. It was not clear that the Council currently had such influence. If the Council wished to take on that role, it might consider what guidance could be offered, and to whom, on the basis of the findings of the pilot evaluations.

23. On the related matter of governance arrangements, two main themes had emerged: the need for centralized planning of overall priorities and positioning, and the requirement for more unified system-level decision-making on programmatic issues. The Joint Inspection Unit wished to encourage Member States to clarify where collective governance would be appropriate and then adapt mechanisms to enable such governance. The non-exhaustive list of system-wide functions listed in paragraph 20 of the Secretary General's report on the repositioning of the United Nations development system (A/72/684-E/2018/7, annex), could be useful in that regard.

24. **Mr. Naidoo** (Vice-Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group) said that the need for credible, independent system-wide evaluation had been discussed frequently within the United Nations system over the past 15 years. The High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment had recommended the creation of a system-wide evaluation mechanism in 2008, and the General Assembly had since underscored the importance of such a mechanism. However, the United Nations still lacked the capacity to adequately implement system-wide evaluation. The

United Nations Evaluation Group would welcome the establishment of a system-wide evaluation function that could serve as an entry point to the coordination of the multiple entities involved and thereby promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, provided it was equipped with a strong mandate and appropriate capacities. The mechanism could inform policymaking, implementation and decision-making at the country level and at the level of the governing bodies of the various United Nations agencies.

25. The implementation of the Secretary-General's proposal to create a unit to carry out independent system-wide evaluation would enable evaluative evidence to be brought to the Council's debates. Guided by the principles of credibility, independence, utility and subsidiarity, the unit could coordinate, collaborate in and lead evaluations related to system-wide matters of strategic interest. It could also synthesize key findings from evaluations of the performance of the United Nations, which would allow Member States to hold the Organization accountable for its actions and the support it was providing to countries.

26. While there were a number of risks associated with the development of system-wide evaluation capacity, such as the need for additional resources and a potential lack of political will, delaying the decision carried the more serious risk of failing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The implementation of a coherent and coordinated system-wide evaluation function would incur an initial cost, but it could result in long-term savings as the work plans of the various evaluation offices converged. The Secretary-General estimated that the system-wide evaluation unit would operate initially on a budget of $3 million, which amounted to 0.01 per cent of the expenditure on United Nations operational activities for development in 2016. That would be a worthwhile investment in ensuring that the remaining 99.99 per cent of Member State contributions to the United Nations development system were well spent.

27. **Mr. Moussa** (Observer for Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, in the interest of efficiency, any discussions on potential reforms to the Council should take place in the context of the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/1. The Group supported the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the operational activities for development segment as an accountability platform for system-wide performance in relation to the 2030 Agenda. However, it was not persuaded that holding biannual meetings of the segment with distinct focuses would be practical or improve accountability. With regard to the proposal to use the second biannual meeting to enhance guidance on the development system's coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts, the Group wished to caution against expanding the roles of the United Nations development system and the Council beyond their mandates.

28. In view of the need to enhance system-wide coordination, the Group supported the proposal to reinforce the interface between the development system and Member States on system-wide issues. It was still considering the proposal to combine the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women but wished to stress that any change to the Executive Boards should not diminish the information made available to Member States concerning the work of those bodies. The Group wished to know what impact the establishment of a joint board would have on the representation of developing countries and their role in the oversight of the work of the entities in question.

29. It might be more useful to enhance the capacities of the Joint Inspection Unit rather than establishing an independent system-wide evaluation unit, to be administered by the Department of Management and directly accountable to the Council, especially in the light of the budgetary implications associated with the creation of a new unit. It was not clear what role the Development Operations Coordination Office had in relation to the proposed unit, or how the new unit would relate to and interact with existing oversight bodies. In that connection, the Group wished to stress the importance of safeguarding the independence and neutrality of any system-wide inspection unit.

30. **Ms. Haque** (Observer for Bangladesh) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to make the operational activities for development segment an accountability platform for system-wide performance in relation to the 2030 Agenda, provided that process was coherent with the strengthening of the Council. With regard to the proposal that the second biannual meeting of the operational activities for development segment should provide guidance on the development system's coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts, the Council's work in that area must remain within the limits of the mandate established in paragraph 24 of General Assembly resolution 71/243.

31. Merging the Executive Boards of the New York-based funds and programmes could result in a regrettable loss of entity-specific accountability and oversight. It might be preferable to ensure accountability, coherence, coordination and collaboration among agencies by making greater use of the existing mechanisms for convening joint board

meetings. She would be interested to hear the views of the panellists in that regard. It should also be noted that many States had a different focal point for each agency, in which case a joint executive board would not reduce travel costs.

32. **Ms. Baños** (El Salvador) said that the merging of the boards should be accompanied by enhanced coordination, coherence, transparency and accountability at the country level, as improved national oversight and leadership would translate into benefits at the regional and global levels. She would be interested to hear the views and recommendations of the panellists with regard to mechanisms that could be used to increase coherence and transparency at the country level so that relevant feedback about the situation on the ground could be shared in forums such as the Council.

33. **Ms. Steiger** (Observer for Switzerland) said that evaluations enabled organizations to take stock of the implementation of their strategies and programmes and the achievement of their goals. If the United Nations development system was being called on to act as a single system, there must be a tool in place to provide information on the progress made towards the achievement of the shared objectives of its entities. Evaluations should not be used to control the United Nations development system but rather to help it to take decisions that would steer its activities in the right direction. It was important to discuss ways to put in place a tool that would provide a sound basis for dialogue with the entities within the development system.

34. **Ms. Wex** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation was open to establishing a joint executive board, granting legislative authority to the existing joint meeting of the Executive Boards or strengthening the Office of Internal Oversight Services. However, doing all three was probably unnecessary and was likely to result in inefficiency and duplication of work. She asked whether the granting of short-term legislative authority to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards would be conducted in parallel with the progressive merging of the boards, and what the timeline and process would be. She also wished to know whether joint meetings of the Executive Boards would be abolished if the joint executive board was established. It was important to give in-depth consideration to the desired functions and purposes of the proposed system-wide evaluation mechanism before deciding what structure such an entity should have.

35. **Ms. Lagrange** (France) said that further consideration should be given to the proposals to enhance oversight and evaluation, as they could help to achieve the primary objective of the reform process: enhanced coordination among the entities of the United Nations development system. With regard to the suggestion to increase the number of joint meetings of the Executive Boards, she asked what the possible topics of such meetings might be. Since effective system-wide evaluation had to be based on solid system-level documents, she wished to know what guarantees were in place to ensure that such documentation would be developed. Lastly, she stressed that the reform of the development system should be carried out alongside the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/1, in the interest of coherence.

36. **Mr. Koonjul** (President of the Executive Board of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations) said that issues such as maintaining entity-specific accountability would most likely be examined during the gradual progression towards a joint executive board, which would take a number of years. He would not favour putting an end to joint meetings of the Executive Boards and would prefer to permanently increase the frequency of those meetings and grant them legislative authority. Under such a system, the Presidents of the different Executive Boards could take the recommendations emanating from the joint meetings to their respective Boards for approval.

37. Delivering as one at the national level was crucial. Governments and the resident coordinators must work together to ensure that national priorities were taken on board. Resident coordinators should make sure that all funds and programmes operating in a country aligned their activities with the Government's national priorities.

38. **Mr. Hattrem** (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations) said that there were compelling arguments in favour of establishing an independent system-wide evaluation function to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It would also be worth giving further consideration to the suggestion of having more than one joint meeting of the Executive Boards per year.

39. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP had not been particularly involved in discussions on the new joint executive board, since that initiative would focus initially on the funds and programmes based in New York. The situation of WFP was also complicated by the

fact that it had been established jointly by the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

40. He had found the joint meetings of the Executive Boards to be very useful. The FAO Council and the Executive Boards of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and WFP, which were all based in Rome, had also held an informal joint meeting in 2017. It was likely that such meetings would continue, although it had not yet been decided what decision-making authority they would have.

41. It was essential to determine the purpose of system-wide evaluations and how they would be used. There were many details to be worked out, but the process of developing the evaluation methodology would be worth the effort if done well.

42. **Mr. Kramer** (Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit) said that the emphasis on horizontal cooperation and action in the 2030 Agenda was a strong argument in favour of system-wide evaluation. However, applying a system-wide lens to the current agency-centric system would be very difficult, given the varying analytical capacities, operating methods and governance arrangements of the different entities. Therefore, it was important to identify the end-users and purposes of future evaluations before undertaking the expensive bureaucratic exercise of determining the structure and means of financing of the new evaluation mechanism.

43. The Joint Inspection Unit was a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and would undertake any tasks requested of it by the General Assembly. However, the Unit's current mandate was not limited to evaluation; it also carried out inspections and investigations concerning a wide range of issues. The Unit would not be able to carry out the proposed system-wide evaluations within its current structure and resources.

44. He encouraged the Council to examine and draw on the results of the pilot initiatives that had been undertaken and also the Joint Inspection Unit's analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2014/6).

Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to the policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*) (A/72/124-E/2018/3, A/72/684-E/2018/7 and A/73/63-E/2018/8)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme (*continued*) (E/2017/34/Rev.1, E/2018/36 and E/2018/65)

General discussion (*continued*)

45. **The President** invited the Council to continue its general discussion of agenda item 7 as a whole.

46. **Mr. Haque** (Observer for Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the Group supported the Secretary-General's vision for transforming the United Nations development system and enhancing its effectiveness, cohesion, leadership and accountability.

47. The Group accorded high priority to the presence of United Nations country teams on its territories. Given the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the expenditures of the United Nations development system should reflect a balanced treatment of all three dimensions of sustainable development. Vulnerable countries such as least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States required additional support to the economic pillar of sustainable development, especially when it came to productive capacity-building and structural transformation.

48. Robust strategic planning at the country level was crucial. Since United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) would serve as the Organization's most important planning instrument for countries, they must be designed to reflect the national priorities and concerns of least developed countries. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 provided strategic guidance on eradicating poverty, achieving development goals and graduating from the least developed country category through strengthened partnerships. Its provisions should be incorporated into the revitalized UNDAFs.

49. The resident coordinator system should primarily focus on development in host countries, and resident coordinators serving in least developed countries must be taught to recognize those countries' unique developmental challenges. Resident coordinators must also adhere to the principles of national leadership, national ownership and non-politicization. Given that securing financing for development was the greatest

challenge faced by least developed countries, resident coordinators should assist those States in mobilizing funds, in consultation with the Government of the relevant host country.

50. United Nations development system entities should enhance their coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts in countries facing humanitarian emergencies, conflicts and post-conflict situations, but without losing their focus on development.

51. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to build partnerships with international financial institutions and noted that the continued decline in core contributions to the United Nations development system had reduced the Organization's effectiveness. Without predictable, sustainable and flexible funding, the United Nations development system would not be fit for purpose. Pooled funds could expand the donor base and foster collaboration among various agencies.

52. In General Assembly resolution 71/243, the United Nations development system had been called upon to continue to prioritize allocations to least developed countries. In that regard, the Group underlined that the offices supporting least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States needed to be strengthened.

53. **Mr. Tevi** (Observer for Vanuatu), speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, said that a devastating cyclone season had recently impacted Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand, and that Papua New Guinea had only just been struck by an earthquake. In that context, reforms to the resident coordinator system and the multi-country offices must facilitate coherent responses to the unique challenges facing Pacific States and other small island developing States.

54. While the Forum welcomed the creation of the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018–2022, a subregional UNDAF that would assist 14 Pacific islands in implementing the 2030 Agenda, it noted that the Pacific island region was a complex environment. The Resident Coordinator in Fiji, for example, had become the Humanitarian Coordinator and was also the senior representative of the United Nations responsible for implementing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, among many other duties. However, she had very few resources for implementing those mandates: the budget for travel, for instance, was inadequate to cover an economic zone of approximately 40 million square kilometres.

55. The Forum would therefore welcome realistic reforms that empowered resident coordinators as the leaders of a new generation of country teams, guaranteed them financial and capacity support from the United Nations system, and ensured that multi-country offices covered fewer countries and were better resourced, particularly for travel and coordination purposes. Funding to resident coordinators should be more stable, predictable and sustainable. The reforms should ensure that the development system could fulfil its mandate in the face of humanitarian, climate and peace challenges. They should also strengthen the resident coordinator system based on the principles of impartiality, neutrality and respect for national sovereignty.

56. **Mr. Mohamed** (Observer for Maldives), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that small island developing States faced unique challenges requiring coherent and holistic responses. Reform of the United Nations development system should take the particular circumstances of those States into account. Since country leadership was crucial for sustainable development, Governments should set the priorities that would underpin UNDAFs. Ultimately, Member States, and not United Nations agencies, were responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda, and therefore UNDAFs should be strictly guided by the priorities of the programme country.

57. Many small island developing States were served by United Nations country teams that operated through multi-country offices. Such country teams must base their priorities on those set by the host country, they must be able to provide the necessary guidance, advice and support, and they must also be able to help Governments in raising funds for priority areas. Each country served by a multi-country office must be allowed to develop its own priorities and be assigned its own UNDAF, as countries from the same region did not necessarily share the same priorities. Multi-country offices should have their own UNDAFs in order to respond to subregional issues.

58. While it was not practical or efficient to appoint a resident coordinator in all programme countries, the practice of assigning one resident coordinator to 10 or more countries was not practical or financially sustainable. Resident coordinators should be well versed in the issues faced by small island developing States, have a background in development and disaster risk management and be culturally sensitive, flexible and respectful of national leadership. Regional reforms that advanced country priorities were also welcome. At the same time, regional-level actors must improve coordination in order to avoid duplication and ensure

that all of the Sustainable Development Goals were addressed.

59. The operational activities for development segment should be restructured as a forum that allowed Member States to increase oversight of United Nations development system entities. While the United Nations development system was not responsible for the management and coordination of partnerships, resident coordinators and United Nations development system entities should help small island developing States to leverage those relationships by developing a network of vetted partners. Greater clarity should also be provided regarding the role of the United Nations Office for Partnerships and how it would function in relation to existing partnerships, such as the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework.

60. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Observer for Cuba) said that, in the repositioning of the development system, UNDAFs should be established as the guiding document for operational activities at the national level, including the work of resident coordinators. The United Nations development system should take a flexible and inclusive approach to country programmes and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It must fully respect the mandates set out in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolutions and be guided by the principle that there was no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Resident coordinators should be given greater authority over country teams in relation to the implementation of UNDAFs. However, her delegation strongly opposed all proposals that departed from the strictly development-related mandate of resident coordinators, diverged from the principles of respect for the sovereignty of host countries and non-interference in their internal affairs, or created difficulties in the relationship between national authorities and the entities of the United Nations development system on the ground.

61. It was important to take into account the specific situation of each region and the capacity and experience of each regional commission. In that context, her delegation supported and commended the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

62. The proposals designed to correct the imbalance between core and non-core resources were welcome. However, it was essential to maintain North-South cooperation in resource mobilization, including official development assistance (ODA) from developed countries. Resources received from partners should be considered additional resources, and partnerships must be developed only on the basis of clear and effective oversight, transparency and accountability mechanisms.

63. **Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer** (Observer for Brazil) said that General Assembly resolution 71/243 had established the principles and key policy orientations of the United Nations development system for the first phase of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The task ahead was not to reopen that resolution but to advance its implementation. Brazil favoured more effective United Nations country teams that were flexible, adapted to local situations and worked closely with Governments. Resident coordinators should lead the country teams in implementing UNDAFs in a manner that reinforced principles of national ownership and accountability to Member States.

64. Resources saved by back-office restructuring should be used to strengthen development system activities. Brazil supported flexible, non-core funding modalities, such as pooled funds, as an alternative to strict earmarking. Pooled funds reduced transaction costs and the reporting burdens associated with development cooperation initiatives. Such initiatives should be programmed at the field level to respond to the development priorities of the concerned country, and developing countries should receive assistance in tapping the full potential of the available funds.

65. Partnerships could be used to encourage stakeholders to engage in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Innovative partnerships could build synergies, improve development results and provide additional funding. Although the United Nations development system could play a role in developing partnerships, it should defer country-level arrangements to Governments. South-South and trilateral cooperation had delivered results on the ground and could be better utilized by a repositioned United Nations development system.

66. **Mr. Mahmadaminov** (Tajikistan) said that the first five Sustainable Development Goals, which addressed poverty, hunger, health, education and gender, received the highest allocation of funds and personnel, while the Goals related to the environment and sustainability remained underfunded. The system needed to fill in those gaps by strengthening existing mechanisms and helping States to leverage financing, partnerships and technologies.

67. His delegation welcomed an approach to United Nations country teams that was demand-driven and tailored to national priorities. Governments should be consulted on the presence of particular United Nations entities in their countries, and must have the final say on strategic UNDAF objectives. While the idea of

independent and impartial resident coordinators was welcome, it was not clear how separating the functions of the resident coordinator and the UNDP resident representative would allow for such independence and impartiality if resident coordinators continued to rely on UNDP platforms and back offices.

68. The Secretary-General's commitment to developing partnerships with the World Bank and other international financial institutions was also welcome and would facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The proposed funding compact should preserve the principles of the operational activities for development of the United Nations development system, and funding should be predictable, less earmarked, and aligned with States' development priorities and strategies.

69. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that any changes to the United Nations development system must be carefully balanced, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in all areas. Reform for its own sake should be avoided. Rather, the most effective elements of the existing development system architecture should be used to improve the system's work. Repositioning of the system should not increase financial burdens for Member States as a result of increased administrative expenditure, and resources should not be shifted to bureaucracy at the expense of development activities.

70. Effective repositioning of the United Nations development system should lead to specific improvements in the overall quality of work of country offices. Such improvements in the field could be achieved by strengthening cooperation with Governments and choosing the optimal means of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, Belarus welcomed the view of the Secretary-General regarding the need to observe the principle of national ownership and stressed that Governments must have a leading role in determining national development policies. Belarus also fully agreed with the Secretary-General's view that support for middle-income countries would need to be reinvigorated, as they represented a major proportion of the world's population.

71. Welcoming the decision to appoint a coordinator for middle-income countries within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, she noted that a future high-level meeting of the General Assembly on middle-income countries would lay the foundation for further support for middle-income countries at the United Nations. Her delegation looked forward to the President of the General Assembly appointing the coordinators of the negotiating process for the holding of such a high-level meeting.

72. **Mr. Momeni** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation looked forward to a stronger and more integrated United Nations development system that prioritized support for developing countries. The operational activities for development segment was an important forum for strengthening those activities and offering policy guidance. The segment also served as an accountability platform regarding system-wide performance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

73. The eradication of poverty in all its forms was the most urgent matter for the United Nations development system to address on the ground. National ownership and leadership should be respected in the repositioning process, and the diverse needs and challenges of developing countries should be addressed. The configuration and placement of United Nations country teams must be determined in consultation with Governments, and host Governments should have the right to make final decisions on UNDAFs. The role of the regional economic commissions as platforms for intergovernmental cooperation and regional integration should be preserved.

74. Robust and sustainable funding for United Nations operational development activities was needed to support developing countries, and system-wide funding should be increased. Non-resident agencies with decades of experience in responding to the development needs of Member States should be given a stronger role in United Nations development system reform.

75. **Mr. Moraru** (Republic of Moldova) said that his country favoured proposals aimed at strengthening country-level coordination and coherence, rationalizing field presence, increasing accountability and improving the efficiency of business operations. It also supported the proposal for UNDAFs to become the principal planning instrument for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A new generation of country teams coordinated by empowered resident coordinators and supported by the relevant components of the United Nations development system was a promising managerial model conducive to a whole-of-system response.

76. In informal briefings on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, it had been emphasized that reforms should make use of existing resources. Member States should therefore receive further information on ways of maximizing efficiencies and cost savings and how to reduce duplication. The proposal to integrate the Executive Boards of the New York-based funds and programmes into a joint board

was an example of a cost-effective initiative that could also strengthen system-wide governance and oversight of the United Nations development system.

77. The Secretary-General's proposal to enhance oversight and evaluation functions by establishing an independent, system-wide evaluation unit deserved consideration. However, clarity was needed how the new unit would interact with existing structures, particularly the Joint Inspection Unit.

78. Funding gaps presented a major obstacle to the efficient and effective delivery of operational activities for development. A repositioned United Nations development system should play a greater role in securing the adequate, predictable and flexible funding that was critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by helping Governments to leverage partnerships and funding from the private sector and other sources. The Joint Policy Fund to Advance the 2030 Agenda through Integrated Policy could help to address funding issues, as could the Secretary-General's proposed funding compact.

79. **Mr. Begeç** (Turkey) said that the success of the 2030 Agenda required major improvements to the United Nations development system. According to General Assembly resolution 71/243, the reform process should proceed in a transparent and inclusive manner and take diverse views into account. National ownership was crucial for the repositioning of the development system. Reform efforts should preserve the delicate balance between peace and development, and the new resident coordinator system should play a stronger role in coordinating humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts at the national level.

80. His delegation requested further clarification on several issues: how the administrative and legal framework of the resident coordinator system would be negotiated with host countries; whether resident coordinators would be appointed to all Member States, and, if not, what criteria would be used; how the new mandate of the resident coordinators could be carried out without duplicating existing thematic and regional United Nations mechanisms; and how the UNDAF preparation phase would change in the light of the Secretary-General's proposal for UNDAFs to serve as the main planning document at the country level.

81. **Mr. Wu** Haitao (China) said that development should be the main focus of the reform process, with an emphasis on poverty eradication. The process, which should be led by Member States and be aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and major General Assembly resolutions, should also observe the principles of sovereignty, equality, non-interference in domestic affairs, international cooperation and respect for States' chosen development models. Furthermore, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be observed, and South-South and trilateral cooperation should complement, but not replace, North-South cooperation.

82. His delegation wished to draw attention to five principles in response to the Secretary-General's proposals. First, The United Nations system-wide strategic document (A/72/684-E/2018/7, annex) should be guided by the mandate contained in General Assembly resolution 71/243, focus on the main theme of development and appropriately address the relationship between development, peace and humanitarian work. Second, the establishment of new country teams should be aligned with country-specific situations and their development priorities. The core task of the country teams was to provide assistance to Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda and building their capacities. Third, reforms to the resident coordinator system should enjoy broad consensus from Member States. Resident coordinators should adhere strictly to the development mandates chosen by host Governments and maintain close communication with them. Fourth, efforts should be made to support the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to strengthen the roles of the regional commissions and to enhance the accountability to Member States through the Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Lastly, given the need for sufficient and predictable funding for the 2030 Agenda, developed countries should fulfil their ODA commitments and the United Nations should deepen its cooperation with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank.

83. **Ms. Kadare** (Observer for Albania) said that if middle-income countries were able to accelerate their own sustainable development, they could contribute significantly to the success of the 2030 Agenda. Middle-income countries such as Albania should be allowed to benefit from initiatives that emphasized peer learning, capacity-building and the inclusion of marginalized groups. Revamped country teams could help greatly in that regard.

84. Regional initiatives were important. Several Western Balkan countries, including Albania, sought to join the European Union, a goal that was a key driver of regional transformation and a powerful incentive for reforms. The United Nations should use its regional

offices to forge partnerships and identify synergies with the 2030 Agenda. Country teams could draw on previous experiences in neighbouring countries while crafting tailored responses to the specific needs of States.

85. UNDAFs should serve as the basic instrument to guide collaboration. An empowered and impartial resident coordinator system was the key to ensuring coherent, accountable and effective responses to country needs. A matrixed reporting model among United Nations agency heads and resident coordinators would increase the effectiveness of reforms, and common back offices at the country level would enhance efficiency. Resident coordinators should receive clear guidance with respect to administrative, accountability and governance issues.

86. Albania endorsed the concept of system-wide results and predictable, multi-year funding, including pooled funding. The Joint Policy Fund would encourage innovation and attract funding for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

87. **Ms. Rosa Suazo** (Observer for Honduras) said that development programmes had become increasingly complex and interrelated, and the development system therefore needed sound mechanisms for technical and normative support to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Secretary-General's report on repositioning the United Nations development system provided a good starting point for discussions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. Honduras supported the proposed package of seven major changes (A/72/684-E/2018/7, para 13), which should lead to better system-wide coordination, planning and accountability at the national level, with substantially improved linkages to the regional and global levels. Those changes must also reverse the highly fragmented funding base.

88. Honduras supported the adoption of flexible, cost-effective and collaborative models for field presence, in line with the needs and priorities of each country. Avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach to the repositioning of the development system was of special concern to middle-income countries, as they faced specific development challenges.

89. **Mr. Won** Doyeon (Republic of Korea) said that his country welcomed a reinvigorated resident coordinator system with a more integrated model for field work and a stronger emphasis on accountability and impartiality. As the resident coordinator system required adequate, predictable and sustainable funding, a detailed analysis was needed of the advantages and disadvantages of the different funding options. Resident coordinators should be able to coordinate system-wide actions at the national level to address humanitarian, development and peace issues. The recruitment system should also foster gender balance and geographical diversity among resident coordinators.

90. The Republic of Korea supported the system-wide approach to partnerships. Harmonized and common partnership standards, due diligence criteria and the timely communication of due diligence results among agencies were crucial for overcoming fragmented and project-focused partnerships.

91. The focus on pooled funds in the funding compact was welcome. States often faced domestic opposition to the mobilization of core funding, whereas pooled funds could allow States to demonstrate to their constituents that development initiatives were effective. While also welcoming the Secretary-General's proposal to utilize the Joint Policy Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund, he wished to hear further details on how those funds, and the discretionary integration fund for the resident coordinators, would be coordinated on the ground.

92. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that a detailed discussion of the Secretary-General's proposals was timely, as it would help to identify ways of improving the development system so that it was better positioned to implement the 2030 Agenda. The time had come for the system to adapt and respond to the new demands arising from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other important instruments. Given the persistence of inequality in both developed and developing countries, improvements were clearly needed, particularly in areas such as youth employment and gender equality.

93. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General on the need to ensure a more responsive and tailored country team configuration. There must be a recognition that a "one-size-fits-all" approach did not contribute effectively to national development strategies. The review of the regional economic commissions should similarly reflect the particular circumstances of each region. For its part, Colombia appreciated the role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean as a strategic partner in regional sustainable development efforts, and also recognized the importance of UNDAFs in helping States to implement the 2030 Agenda.

94. A reinvigorated resident coordinator system must promote cross-agency collaboration to optimize resources, increase effectiveness and avoid duplication. The Joint Policy Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund had been critical to peacebuilding and sustainable development efforts in Colombia and were tangible examples of how the United Nations, through better

coordination among its agencies and programmes and with the support of Member States, could improve conditions for thousands of people.

95. **Mr. Hoshino** (Japan) said that while his country strongly supported the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, questions remained about the extent and cost of the reforms proposed. His delegation therefore welcomed the explanations provided to date by the Secretariat in that regard.

96. The Secretary-General's latest report on repositioning the United Nations development system (A/72/684-E/2018/7) contained commitments to enhance accountability and transparency through the funding compact, thereby incentivizing contributions from donors. Japan looked forward to further such commitments to improve efficiency and effectiveness, in line with paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 71/243. In that regard, he wished to commend UNICEF for the successful review of its business processes: the resulting improvements in efficiency had directly benefited developing countries. He also welcomed the proposal to establish common back offices. Translating such ideas into bolder and more specific commitments would encourage contributions from donors.

97. The United Nations would not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals alone or in isolation. The Organization must therefore strengthen partnerships with other actors, make the most of its comparative advantages and adapt the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the specific context of each country.

98. **Mr. Paolino Laborde** (Uruguay) said that it was important to adopt measures at all levels to enable the United Nations development system to better promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The system must be able to provide support to developing countries in a comprehensive manner that respected national development plans and strategies and was in line with General Assembly resolution 71/243. The primary objective of the 2030 Agenda — the eradication of poverty — could not be achieved unless more stable, predictable and sustainable funding was made available for the operational activities of the development system. Financing should be provided in line with national development priorities and strategies in order to address the specific situation of each State.

99. His delegation welcomed the references to South-South cooperation as a means of promoting development in the Secretary-General's reports on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. However, South-South cooperation should complement, not replace, North-South cooperation, which remained the most important means of mobilizing the resources necessary for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that connection, developed countries should make a meaningful effort to meet and increase their ODA commitments.

100. The primary function of the resident coordinator should be in-country coordination of United Nations operational activities for development, in collaboration with the country team and with the guidance of the relevant Government. There should be balanced geographical representation and gender parity among the staff of resident coordinator offices, and staffing should be carried out in coordination with the host country.

101. Collaboration and synergies among agencies should be enhanced, and they should not compete with one another. Furthermore, resources should be efficiently allocated and used. In that connection, it was important to take into account lessons learned from the "Delivering as one" pilot and best practices from countries that had chosen to adopt other systems. The specific needs of each country should be determined without reference to their per capita incomes.

102. The universality, scope and cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda called for coordination, solidarity and innovative efforts in order to mobilize the additional financial resources required to achieve its ambitious objectives.

103. **Mr. Larhmaid** (Morocco) said that the Secretariat and Member States should work together to strengthen the resident coordinator system and country teams while addressing budgetary constraints. The proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/72/684-E/2018/7) would help development agencies to better align their activities with the national development policies of States.

104. As poverty eradication was the overarching objective of the Sustainable Development Goals, it must be central to the activities of the United Nations development system. That was especially true in developing countries, particularly in Africa. For that reason, African priorities must be taken into account in the reform process. Morocco also supported efforts to assess and improve capacity-building within the United Nations development system in support of South-South and triangular cooperation.

105. The proposals to enhance coordination and coherence among United Nations agencies in the field must be implemented in harmony with the development models adopted by Member States. Improvements to the

resident coordinator system based on a new generation of country teams could only succeed in the context of national ownership of operational activities for development. UNDAFs must be the sole instrument guiding cooperation between the United Nations development system and States.

106. The proposals to reform accountability and control structures at the United Nations agency level, including proposals related to the revitalization of the Council, deserved special attention to ensure that each institution's mandate was fulfilled. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's vision for a predictable and flexible financing strategy that took the needs of developing countries into account.

107. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that the United Nations development system should prioritize the eradication of poverty in all its forms and assist developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda in a manner consonant with their national priorities and strategies. The repositioning of the system should ensure that national ownership and leadership were maintained and that programme countries received expert assistance in leveraging resources.

108. It was important for entities of the United Nations development system and resident coordinators to bear in mind that coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts should be enhanced only in specific situations, namely where countries faced humanitarian emergencies or conflict or post-conflict situations. Member States should therefore not be asked to support a blanket mandate for the nexus approach; rather, such approval should be sought on a case-by-case basis.

109. To meet their specific needs and priorities, Governments should have the prerogative to decide on the configuration and presence of United Nations country teams. In addition, United Nations development system entities and resident coordinators should be funded through enhanced core resources and loosely earmarked non-core resources; partnerships with the private sector should be explored through an intergovernmental process; and the system-wide strategic document (A/72/684-E/2018/7, annex) should similarly be intergovernmentally agreed. Lastly, the proposed repositioning of the United Nations development system should lead to increased funding for the 2030 Agenda and should not increase burdens on developing countries.

110. **Mr. Lamberti** (Italy) said that effective system-wide action among the various agencies operating in a given country required a strengthened, impartial and independent resident coordinator system and country teams aligned around a common UNDAF. Those enhancements should facilitate the multi-partner and multi-stakeholder partnerships that were crucial for sustainable development. System-wide coherence would also be served by integrated and effective participation from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions.

111. As a donor country that favoured multilateral and core financial contributions in its aid financing decisions, Italy agreed that the current funding patterns of the United Nations development system needed reform. It encouraged increased cooperation among United Nations development system institutions and improved integration and coordination in the activities of their executive boards.

112. The only way to enhance the credibility of the development system and to attract funding was through increased transparency and accountability. The Secretary-General's reports on repositioning the United Nations development system provided a solid foundation for discussions of those issues.

113. **Ms. Barandua** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the 2030 Agenda required genuine changes to the working methods of the United Nations. Greater emphasis must be placed on collective results and more accountability at the country, regional and headquarters levels. In addition, the United Nations must improve coherence among various development actors and adapt current methods for financing development activities.

114. Her delegation wished to make several observations regarding the ambitious proposals contained in the Secretary-General's latest report (A/72/684-E/2018/7). Reinvigorating the role of the resident coordinators was essential. The proposals in the report satisfied the minimum needed for resident coordinators and United Nations agencies to work more effectively. Switzerland supported the use of assessed contributions to fund the resident coordinator system, as it was reasonable for all Member States to pay a proportionate share of the costs; however, in order to ensure predictable and sustainable funding, assessed contributions should perhaps be combined with other sources of funding.

115. The system-wide strategic document (A/72/684-E/2018/7, annex) was an important step toward clarifying the aims of the United Nations development system in the light of the 2030 Agenda, although further elaboration was still required.

116. The proposed funding compact would address the need for changes to the way development activities were funded. Funding must be appropriate and used

effectively, and joint accountability mechanisms must be strengthened. Contributions to pooled funds should be encouraged, not only by the United Nations system but also by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

117. **Ms. Nguyen** Phuong Nga (Viet Nam) said that General Assembly resolution 71/243 was the key document to guide the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The repositioning process should focus on the eradication of poverty in all its forms while maintaining respect for State ownership of sustainable development strategies. National priorities and development levels should also be taken into account.

118. The new generation of United Nations country teams must work closely with host Governments in formulating and implementing UNDAFs and any other United Nations planning instruments. In that spirit, the Government of Viet Nam and the United Nations country team had jointly developed "One Strategic Plan 2017-2021", which was based on the principles of inclusion, equity and sustainability and was aligned with the country's socioeconomic development strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the "Green One United Nations House" in Viet Nam had led to positive changes in the country team's working methods. Shared business services and back-office functions had helped to reduce costs, and the co-location of agencies had enhanced coherence and efficiency within the country team.

119. The decrease in core resources had undermined the credibility of the development system. Contributions to inter-agency pooled funds, such as the Joint Policy Fund, were therefore essential for United Nations joint activities and programmes. As provided for in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, countries should honour their ODA commitments.

120. **Mr. Montilla** (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said that a strengthened United Nations development system must support national efforts to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions, as that was critical for the achievement of sustainable development. In that context, the specific challenges faced by each country in adopting policies aligned with the 2030 Agenda should be taken into consideration. He welcomed a United Nations presence that was more robust yet respectful of the right of each State to chart its own course. The new vision for the resident coordinator system must provide flexibility and avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

121. While welcoming the proposal for a funding compact to ensure flexible and predictable access to resources, he hoped that proposed budget increases would not impose financial burdens on developing countries, particularly the least developed among them. As a developing island State in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic was exposed to repeated natural disasters that had erased years of economic progress, increased its national debt and forced the country to divert funds from social programmes to reconstruction efforts.

122. His delegation commended the work done by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to support national and regional development activities. All regional economic commissions should be strengthened, and their scope and assistance to Member States should not be reduced. The commissions provided a space for the design of strategies that incorporated regional dimensions.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.